

# Childhood Education

**Good Lines  
of  
Communication  
November 1955**

JOURNAL OF THE  
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Rather Than  
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**1955-56: Courage To  
Move Forward**

# Childhood Education

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**The people who care about the child  
must know and respect each other.**



## *We Meet—As People*

**H**AVE YOU LEFT A MEETING—A GOOD MEETING, IN WHICH QUESTIONS important to you were discussed—with the thought that now that you know how the speaker feels, you would like to talk with him about your special interests? Have you laid down a book or a magazine with a glow of satisfaction—or a redder glow of anger? Oh, for a chance to talk with that author!

Evidence that some avail themselves of the opportunity lies in the increasing number of “letters to the editor” and to authors, and in the number of books, articles, radio and TV programs interpreting or condemning education.

The last several years have seen doors of schools, and homes, swing wider! There are few schools without scheduled meetings for parents and teachers. Many have pre-school conferences for the parents and teachers of each group. Each publication, each meeting, each conference creates new—or, at least, strengthens old—lines of communication. Unscheduled and often unforeseen times to “talk it over” can be more valuable than the meetings.

Open doors to both homes and schools (with welcome mats out) are important. There was a quick change of atmosphere in the Smith home when Mrs. Smith learned that this visit from the teacher, unlike those of last year and the year before, was for the purpose of discussing what Pat was doing, and how well! Parents in one school have almost forgotten the questioning looks, the quaking hands, when notes came from school in their own days. The envelopes from school now (surprisingly, at first) contain messages about what the principal saw Bobby, or Sue, or Ting doing as he visited in their rooms.

People from many countries who visit ACEI Headquarters talk at length on education principles, but excitement lights their eyes when they talk about the children they know. Solid citizens who feel they are foes of schools (although friends of children) soften when they talk about specific children and listen as individuals. Teachers who know a great deal about child development and the teaching of reading realize that all the academic and professional education they can acquire will not help Johnny until Johnny's family is also a part of their learning. Parents are aware that when they know “the other people” in their children's lives in school, church, and community, they understand their children better.

**W**HAT REALLY COUNTS FOR JOHNNY, HY0, PABLO, IS THAT THE PEOPLE who care about him know and respect each other.—FRANCES HAMILTON, *Executive Secretary, Association for Childhood Education International.*

## In *Unity* There Is *Strength*

*Communication provides a necessary two-way street for administrators and school personnel. It must be shared with the board of education, parents, and other citizens of the community. This article which will raise your sights for inter- and outer-school communication has been prepared by Paul J. Misner, superintendent of schools, Glencoe, Ill.*

THE DECADE 1945-1955 WILL PROBABLY be recorded as an *Era of Controversy* in public education. 1955-1965 may well become known as an *Era of Good Will and Progress*.

For four days—November 28 through December 1—more than 2000 citizens from 48 states and territories will meet in Washington, D. C., to participate in the White House Conference on Education. The national meeting will have been preceded by local, regional, and state conferences in which thousands of citizens from every walk of life will have considered the problems of their schools and will have had the opportunity to make suggestions for solutions.

The prospects for the future of America's schools are conspicuously brighter in 1955 than they were in 1945. At the beginning of the decade schools throughout the nation were being subjected to bitter criticisms and relentless attacks. Irresponsible and selfishly-motivated individuals sought deliberately to undermine public confidence in the programs, policies, and personnel of public education. In retrospect it must be admitted that these early critics rendered a useful, if not a distinguished, service. They aroused the interest and concern of literally millions of thoughtful and responsible citizens who are now united in working together for the improvement of the public schools.

What happens during the next decade will depend upon more than an aroused and interested public opinion. It will depend equally upon the courageous professional leadership of teachers and administrators who can and will interpret the interests and needs of children and youth with determined confidence and with an impressive unity of purpose and action.

The thousands of interested and responsible citizens who are now engaged in constructive efforts to improve the nation's schools recognize and respect the contributions that teachers and administrators can make. They have the right, however, to expect thoughtful and convincing guidance on those problems and issues that involve professional knowledge and competence. Teachers and administrators who, themselves, have failed to achieve essential understanding and agreement concerning the purposes and practices of the schools cannot hope to exercise leadership no matter how interested these citizens may be.

The achievement of a desirable unity of purpose and action among the members of the professional organization will depend greatly upon effective communication among all members of the group. Teachers will implement effectively and support loyally policies and programs which they understand and in the development of which they have partici-

NER

pated. Administrators will be able to exercise creative and courageous leadership when their relationships with teachers are based upon mutual confidence and respect. Edgar Dale has said, "to put ourselves in the shoes of others is to share experience, to make it common . . . it is a realistic definition of communication."

In the next decade it is imperative that teachers and administrators practice the art of wearing each other's shoes and thus through more effective communication achieve a high level of unity within the profession itself.

### ***It Takes a Two-Way Street***

Effective communication is a two-way street. It implies that teachers and administrators have cooperatively formulated and accepted the major aims and objectives of the educational program and are working together in an effort to achieve their common purposes. Well-planned inservice programs have proved to be one of the best means of achieving cooperation among teachers and administrators. Experience with these programs has demonstrated that certain conditions are essential if good communication is to be maintained. The problems selected for group study and research must stem from the recognized needs of the school system and must be cooperatively determined. They must be carefully and thoroughly defined in order that there will be complete understanding with respect to what the group effort is expected to achieve.

In the development of inservice study projects, provision must be made for frequent reports of progress to the entire group by those members most directly responsible for a particular activity. When the time comes for translating the results of study and research into action, adequate time and opportunity must be provided for all members of the group to participate in the decisions.

The recent controversy concerning the teaching of reading in the schools illustrates the need and the value of the cooperative development of educational policies and practices. The demagogic and totally irresponsible attack on modern methods of teaching reading by the author of a well-publicized best seller created little or no hysteria in those communities in which teachers and administrators could join together in a clear, unequivocal, and convincing interpretation of what really constitutes an effective program of reading instruction. The harmful effects of attacks of this sort on public opinion stem from those situations in which the professional people, themselves, appear to be hopelessly divided and confused.

Although planned programs of teacher-administrator cooperation and participation are essential for effective communication within the school system, there is need as well for many in-person relationships. As school systems have grown in size, communication between those "at the summit" and the scene of action in the classroom has become increasingly difficult to maintain. Walls of misunderstanding have arisen between central office administrators and teachers due largely to the limited opportunity for in-person contacts.

Recently, Benjamin C. Willis, Superintendent of Schools in Chicago, has taken decisive action which should significantly improve communication among the teachers and administrators in the second largest city of the nation. Under the new Chicago plan of organization the school system has been divided into 14 unified school districts including both elementary and secondary schools. An associate superintendent has been assigned to each of the 14 districts and each organizational unit will be permitted and encouraged to develop educational pro-

grams designed to meet the needs of the particular school-community located within the district.

The advantages of the Chicago plan for improved communication are readily apparent. Associate superintendents will be able to know the people with whom they work. Principals and teachers in each school building will be able to develop more effective relationships as they are encouraged to work together with lay citizens in the improvement of school-community programs of education. Frequent opportunities can be provided for elementary and secondary teachers to share experiences and thus eliminate many of the conflicts that often exist between these two groups. Apologists for authoritarian, centralized administrative practices frequently contend that such practices are necessary whenever large numbers of people become involved in the operation of a school system. Apparently educational leaders in Chicago refuse to accept this conventional assumption and are engaged in an experiment that should greatly increase opportunities for in-person relationships.

### ***The Board Must Be Included***

Efforts to improve techniques of communication will inevitably involve others than teachers and administrators. Boards of education have the final responsibility and authority for the determination of educational policies and programs. It is very important that members of these boards be fully informed concerning the values, problems, needs, and achievements of the schools. The administrator who assumes sole responsibility for interpreting the educational program to the board of education definitely limits his opportunities for effective communication. Experience has demonstrated clearly that teachers and other school personnel can help significantly when

they participate actively with the administrator and the board of education in a continuing program of evaluation. In some communities representatives of the faculty regularly attend meetings of the board of education; are encouraged to participate, and then assume responsibility for reporting to their colleagues on the proceedings. In many communities the official minutes of board of education meetings are distributed to all members of the school organization.

In Glencoe, all-day meetings of representatives of the faculty and the board of education are scheduled three or four times each year. In these meetings the problems, needs, and achievements of the schools are presented and frankly and thoughtfully considered. As a result of these joint meetings school board members not only receive valuable information about the schools but gain an increased appreciation of the teacher's role in the educational enterprise. Similarly, teachers achieve a better understanding of the problems faced by the board of education and become more effective in helping with their solution.

### ***Lay Citizens Have a Voice***

With the phenomenal growth of public interest in the schools in recent years, it is becoming increasingly necessary that effective communication be achieved between lay citizens and all school personnel. Conspicuous beginnings have been made throughout the country in the achievement of better relationships among parents and teachers. PTA programs are being planned cooperatively by both parents and teachers and tend increasingly to deal with problems of mutual interest and concern. Many of the current controversies that have centered on the subjects of discipline, the three R's, and methods of reporting pupils' progress have been calmly and

intelligently resolved in countless communities in which parents, teachers, and administrators have learned to work together in a spirit of confidence and good will.

The parents of children enrolled in the schools at any time represent, however, only about one-half of the citizens who have an interest in and are concerned about the educational program of the community. It is essential that effective communication be established and maintained with this nonschool-related group of citizens.

As efforts are made to achieve improved communication with these citizens, the wise school administrator will recognize and utilize the contributions that the entire school personnel can make. Teachers, like other people, have an interest in activities and groups outside the walls of their classrooms. They like to belong to and participate in the civic, social, religious, and political organizations that operate within the community. The administrator who recognizes the need for maintaining good communication with all segments of the community will not only encourage the membership of teachers in community groups but will provide adequate time and opportunity for their participation.

### ***The Necessary Attitudes***

Improved communication depends in the final analysis upon the attitudes of the individuals who are seeking to communicate with each other. The administrator who is genuinely interested in people and who succeeds in maintaining

friendly, easy, and comfortable human relationships will inspire confident, cooperative, and dependable relationships among the individuals with whom he works.

At a time when so many people are living in a climate of fear, suspicion, and uncertainty it is imperative that teachers and administrators make every possible effort to create conditions that will encourage all members of the community to work together for the best interests of its children and youth. With the critical problems that now face the schools of the nation it is unthinkable that, through lack of communication, teachers and administrators should find themselves opposed to each other and that citizens should find themselves opposed to the policies and programs of their educational leaders.

Within the next decade decisions must be made concerning the schools that will have a profound effect upon the lives of America's children and youth—decisions that may well determine the future of the nation as a community of freedom-loving people.

There is every reason to believe that the right decisions will be made and that we are now upon the threshold of one of the most promising decades in the entire history of public education.

Whatever the outcome may be, much will depend upon how well school teachers and administrators have learned to communicate with each other and with the public that must inevitably make these decisions.

**COMMUNITIES BUILD SCHOOLS; SCHOOLS, IN TURN, BUILD COMMUNITIES.** The interaction is continuous and inevitable. The quality of the interaction, however, varies widely from one community, or one school, to another. The highest quality of interaction is to be found when there is a mutual understanding of each by the other; when relationships are consciously planned, not just allowed to happen.—Excerpt from the New Dominion Series issued by the Extension Division, University of Virginia.



# Communication Skills Are Developed

*The skills of writing and speaking are learned. With the increased emphasis on communication, students who are future teachers need practice in acquiring such skills and teachers already in the field need help in perfecting their skills. Here is a "resource unit" for teacher education institutions and inservice programs.*

**I**T TAKES SKILL TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY. Some of us may say and write just "what comes naturally" and manage quite well, but many are the young teachers (and experienced ones, too) who flounder in the sea of parent-pupil-citizen-staff relationships or take refuge on an island of reserved isolationism, through lack of knowing "how to do it."

There are instances to which we might point where those responsible for pre-service and inservice education programs have developed some good ways of helping teachers grow in their communication skills. These examples might serve as a stimulus to the rest of us. More helpful yet may be a briefer but more extensive listing of ideas that might be appropriate to different situations—a resource unit for teacher education, as it were!

Certainly it is unwise, if not dangerous, for a college professor, or a school supervisor, to propose ways and means of developing communication skills (or to build any other area of teacher competency) without being quite clear first about the nature of the job the modern teacher has to do and what skills are needed to accomplish it effectively. There is some difficulty in presenting such material clearly. Perhaps the reader could

see the relationships between communication needs, objectives, and activities best if they were shown in chart form with parallel columns.

<i>Needs→</i>	<i>Objectives→</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Communication opportunities in a modern teaching program	Skills, attitudes, information, and understanding	Possible pre-service and inservice educational activities

However, since these pages do not lend themselves to such a manner of presentation, the reader may keep the basic pattern in mind while examining the outline:

## Communication Opportunities

1. Communicating with parents
  - a. Conferences
  - b. Room meetings
  - c. Informal conversation
  - d. Telephone calls
  - e. Letters
  - f. Report forms, grades, check lists
  - g. PTA programs
  - h. Home visits
2. Communicating with laymen
  - a. Lay advisory committees
  - b. Service clubs, church groups, community organizations
  - c. News releases
  - d. Special school visitation
  - e. Informal conversation with friends and neighbors.
3. Communication with teachers
  - a. Faculty meetings

*Robert S. Fox is director of the University School and associate professor of education, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.*

- b. Curriculum committees
- c. Informal conversation with colleagues
- d. Conferences of professional organizations
- e. Writing for professional journals and yearbooks

- 4 Communicating with pupils
  - a. Pupil-teacher planning
  - b. Giving directions, assignments, and assistance
  - c. Informal conversation
  - d. Individual conferences
  - e. Conducting class discussions
  - f. Worksheets, study materials

### Objectives

Objectives in terms of some of the skills, attitudes, information, and understandings.

1. To know how to plan for and carry on a parent-teacher conference.
2. To have a knowledge of problems of home and family living so that contacts with parents may be conducted in an atmosphere of reciprocal understanding.
3. To have sufficient skill in promoting good human relations that the conference may satisfy the personal as well as the intellectual needs of each of the participants.
4. To be able to plan a room meeting cooperatively with a parent chairman or committee.
5. To lead or participate in a discussion of pertinent problems with a group of parents in such manner as to promote interest and involvement.
6. To be able to share, through informal conversation, information that is helpful and interesting to parents.
7. To be sufficiently at ease with the telephone to use it frequently in communicating with parents.
8. To develop a personality sufficiently stable and mature to be able to work with parents without needing to utilize this relationship to meet serious personal needs.
9. To be able to write letters to parents, using correct English, expressing ideas simply and in clearly organized form.
10. To understand the problems inherent in communicating with parents through such symbolisms as letter grades or check lists.
11. To have knowledge of group discussion and participation techniques and skill in help-

ing others with the application of them in various parent and staff meetings.

12. To know what is going on in the community so that teacher and layman may have common interests in addition to their interest in the school program.

13. To have sufficient background in educational theory and research to be able to support one's educational practices in discussion with parents and laymen.

14. To appreciate the need for sharing of ideas among members of a school staff in a way that encourages a team relationship.

15. To understand the social dynamics of the classroom as well as growth characteristics of children so that the teacher's communication efforts will be appropriate.

16. To be able to participate in pupil-teacher planning activities in such manner that development of pupil initiative and responsibility is encouraged while positive guidance is given.

### Possible Educational Activities

#### Preservice

1. Utilize "pupil-teacher" planning approach in the conduct of college classes, taking care to study the role of the leader in assisting members of the group to share their resources and creative thinking in fullest possible measure.

2. Promote wholesome personality development by providing well-rounded program of activities (recreational, social, intellectual) in which the college instructors also participate.

3. Provide student teachers with opportunity to prepare a plan and gather materials for an actual parent conference, which the supervising teacher then conducts.

4. Study about family life in various social groups in the United States through courses on "the family," by assisting with community surveys, by examining research studies.

5. Utilize in the college classroom as wide a variety of communication procedures as possible—lecture, panel, written materials, small group discussion, role-playing, visual and audio devices—developing communication skills in students through example and practice.

6. Provide as part of the preservice education program a course in speech which emphasizes functional use of communication skills in such areas as speaking to large groups, informal talks, conversation, partici-

pation in small group projects (as leader, as group member).

7. Encourage each preservice teacher to write at least one article suitable for publication in a professional journal. Utilize the class as a resource for suggesting improvements in style and content.

#### *Inservice*

1. Promote a school atmosphere of informality which encourages a sharing of ideas and problems freely (coffee room, open door to principal's office).

2. Use tape recording of occasional parent conference sessions (taken with cooperation of parent) for analysis.

3. Emphasize the parent-teacher conference held early in the school year as a means for sharing information and developing plans, rather than for reporting purposes (thus setting a basis for good communication throughout the year).

4. Involve the teaching staff in planning for faculty meetings and other staff activities, so that the skills of communicating as a part of cooperative problem-solving are developed through being practiced.

5. Give a group of teachers or parents an opportunity to assign letter grades to the performance of several children described in brief case studies. Analyze the variations in the grades assigned and the reasons for them.

6. Provide a substitute so that a teacher may attend luncheon meetings of a service club, not only so that he may interpret the school program, but so he may gain a broader understanding of civic problems and community needs.

7. Encourage a regular sharing in faculty meetings of the ideas various members of the staff have gained from their broader community contacts.

8. Enlist the active help of parents in carrying on many of the school activities—clarifying objectives, planning learning activities, gathering resources (or serving as resources), evaluating—for through such participation will develop a substantial base upon which effective communication can build.

#### *Useful at Both Preservice and Inservice Levels*

1. Provide personal counseling service of a psychiatrist or psychologist on a consultant basis.

2. Role-play various types of conferences

(students in class, teachers in teacher meetings, parents and teachers in PTA meetings).

3. Develop a plan for an introductory room meeting at which the teacher will describe the school program to parents. Present this program to a college class or in a faculty meeting for reactions and suggestions.

4. Role-play a situation depicting the child bringing his report card home; the mother explaining it to the father; the father in conference with the teacher searching for an interpretation.

5. Develop a card file into which are placed, as one uncovers them in his professional reading, summaries of research which support and clarify specific educational practices.

The modern school is moving rapidly in the direction of involving *all* those who are concerned with the educational program in the process of its development and improvement. It is no longer sufficient to merely advise parents about the achievement levels of their children; no longer can we be satisfied with the "public relations" program which is directed primarily toward informing the citizen. Certainly the day has passed when we can defend the teacher who excludes the pupils from the process of setting goals, planning activities which will help them achieve the goals, and evaluating the results.

Such involvement of pupils, parents, laymen, and professional colleagues calls for a competence in communication skills that far exceeds that which many teachers have possessed.

It is clear that the foregoing objectives and suggested activities emphasize more than the development of techniques or skills. Effective communication requires some understanding of the other person's background, interests, and problems; and must deal with significant content, as well as utilize technical skills. The preservice and inservice programs can be most helpful by providing opportunity for developing this background of understanding and for practicing the skills needed



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*Courtesy, Stanislaus County Schools, Calif.*

**Involvement of pupils, parents, laymen,  
and professional colleagues calls for  
competence in communication skills.**

in situations which are related to present and future communication needs. It is encouraging to note that the example set in many education courses is one of maximizing student participation, of using a variety of techniques over and above the lecture, and of providing many opportunities for students to practice skills of communication in a variety of ways.

A good resource unit should give some attention to evaluation procedures. The one presented here does not do so be-

cause of space limitation. It is assumed, however, that the true measure of the success of the activities listed will be found in the school program where parents, teachers, laymen, and pupils are working together toward goals which all accept and understand. Good communication will have made possible full utilization of the resources of all those who are concerned with the educational program, and will result not only in enthusiastic support but in vastly better educational opportunities for children.

## *Give Parents a Real Place in School*

*If home and school are to give unified direction and guidance to children's growth, parents must have a share in the program. The why and how are well presented by Frank M. Himmelmann, director, Campus Laboratory School, Wisconsin State College, Milwaukee.*

THE STAFF OF ONE SCHOOL SAID THEY could describe themselves with a parody of "Old MacDonald Had A Farm:" "Parents here, parents there, here a parent, there a parent, everywhere parents!"

Some educators might throw up their hands in despair at such a thought, others may raise an eyebrow quizzically and some would say "Tell me more." Those who respond by saying "that's the way we like it" have made a real discovery, a uranium bonanza, so to speak.

The role of the parent in education has become an increasingly important one. For many years the members of the board of education were the representatives of the parents. They met with the representatives of the professional staff and considered the significant problems and questions of the school and parents. This has been a satisfactory procedure for examining certain functions and common interests pertaining to the education of children. Yet both the professional staff and parents have given indications that in today's school more direct communication was needed between parents and teachers and the school if the best work with children was to be accomplished.

Certain information and understandings about children and about education must be shared if home and school are

to give unified direction and guidance to a child's growth and learning. Appropriate relationships and means of communication need to be established which will help—

- to promote a better understanding of what children are like.

- to share information and understandings about home and community life as it affects the child.

- to develop a clearer understanding of the goals and methods of education.

An examination of the PTA will reveal the parents' attempts to do their part in sharing these objectives. Likewise professional staffs have initiated various methods to meet these objectives. From these experiences it can be concluded that this is not necessarily an easy job. It takes time, skill, and understanding. It takes the efforts of *both* parents and teachers. However, we undoubtedly have arrived at the place where we suggest "give the parent a real place in the school" because we realize that we must work together if we hope to achieve our objectives.

### *With These Things in Mind—*

The presence of certain characteristics and qualities will be helpful in making this relationship between parents and teachers successful and productive.

A *positive attitude* toward cooperation between parents and professional staff helps to set the climate for successful relationships. It must reflect confidence in parents and belief that worth-while goals can be achieved by working with them as members of the team.

*Real purposes* for establishing a pro-

gram of parent-school relationships will give direction and meaning to the planning and carrying out of the activities. Avoid being the target of jibes inferred in statements such as a recent definition of a committee: a meeting of the unfit appointed by the unwilling to do the unnecessary.

An *understanding of the roles* parents can play as distinguished from those which belong to the professional staff is needed to help avoid conflict and misunderstanding as activities are planned and materialize.

*Willingness* to participate in a two-way relationship will give support to the school's sincerity in initiating and developing the parent relations program.

A *careful identification of and use of the leadership qualities and skills* possessed by both staff members and parents will assure more successful activities.

*Opportunities for parents* to function on the school team in activities directed to real ends and not actions of pretense.

*Diverse activities* in which parents, pupils, and teachers can associate on an informal, social basis and in serious discussion, study, and deliberation should be provided.

Communication through news letters, bulletins, conferences, and general staff availability keeping everyone informed.

#### ***Parents Can Be Reached Through—***

A varied assortment of activities which is a part of the relationship established should be directed to achieve your objectives. They will be more successful if they are planned according to the job you wish to accomplish and if they appeal to the interests of the participants. As the planning of activities progresses, the different ways of reaching all the participants and the varied methods for meeting your objectives should be considered. Experiences which have served

successfully are found in these activities:

- The area of reporting pupil progress provides a medium for interpreting and giving information about the educational program and the individual child's progress. Person to person conferences either at school or in the home enhance the meaning and understanding of the report and provide for an exchange of information and understandings. Letters, statements, check lists, and grade cards can contribute to this goal to the degree that they are organized and directed to this purpose. Children's assembly programs and shared culminating activities and reports, in a certain sense, might also be considered as a technique for reporting to parents.

- Room meetings at which the teacher discusses the characteristics of the age level and what he hopes to accomplish during the year, or the problems the group plans to work on, give the parents information about the school and their child. They are also in a better position to interact with the child when sharing his school experiences and plans.

- Study and discussion groups or parents' forums providing the setting in which problems, new interests, and opportunities to find out how others meet similar situations can be explored using a variety of methods. Films and resource persons are used to make the exchange meaningful.

- General sessions such as the PTA meeting where one listens to specialists or experts discuss matters pertinent to children, home, and education should be planned to give information and to build interest.

- Activities helping the school and parents meet joint objectives of school and parents necessitate service responsibilities. Among these are the room mother, the volunteer office assistant, those who are needed to operate the PTX (outgrown

clothing exchange), the school and parents' library, the noon lunch program, band mothers, and so on. These responsibilities bring the parents into intimate touch with the school as it really functions and gives them the opportunity to observe and learn through firsthand experiences.

- Membership on the PTA board or parents' advisory council, school health council, and other advisory groups for special programs and services requires that parents take on advisory and policy recommending roles for the school. Participation on staff committees such as those concerned with curriculum objectives, report cards, and the initiation of new services for the school are other areas in which parents help the school staff. Parents make it possible for the staff to obtain a broader perspective and to reflect the parents' objectives more distinctly in school planning.

- Social functions and family-school affairs which tie fun and learning together have contributed much to bringing school and home closer together. Among these are the familiar open house programs. Others are mother-daughter luncheons as a part of a family living program demonstration or a style show; the father and son sports dinner following a round of shared sports activities; a splash party in the school pool for parents, children, and teachers followed by a dinner and program; a community Halloween party for children and adults; a box social and book fair, white elephant sale or silent auction or exhibit of chil-

dren's work; family night with square dancing and games after a brief session where children report to parents on their progress and on what is happening in their classroom; activities just for the parents where they can get to know better, in an adult setting, the parents of their children's associates.

### ***Be Sure That—***

There are important elements to keep in mind when initiating such activities. Be sure that—

- parents participate fully in the planning.

- parents share responsibility for developing and carrying out the activities.

- activities are appropriate to the interests represented by the total parent population.

- plans avoid having the group involved in too many or too few, or too complex or too trivial activities to establish real purpose and interest.

- activities are directed toward achieving your objectives in parent-school relationships.

- all parents are included in some way. Keep in mind that parents vary in the rate at which they can become involved and in the kinds of activities which are meaningful and satisfying to them; that they are also influenced by other demands on their time.

With genuine interest, purpose, and effort, there should be little difficulty in finding a real place for parents in the school.

**TEACHING IS AN ART—AN ART SO GREAT AND SO DIFFICULT TO MASTER THAT a man or woman can spend a long life at it, without realizing much more than his limitations and his mistakes, and his distance from the ideal. But the main aim of my happy days has been to become a good teacher. just as every architect wishes to be a good architect, and every professional poet strives toward perfection.—WILLIAM LYON PHELPS.**

## Good Techniques for Conferencing

*More and more schools are making use of conferences for communication between parents and teachers. This means that more and more people are needing to know better ways for conducting the conference.*

A CONFERENCE IS ALWAYS HELD FOR A purpose. The purpose must be kept in mind if the conference is to be successful. It helps to channel the discussion if the teacher can clarify the purpose at the beginning.

For example, "I have invited you to come in so we can get acquainted and you can tell me something about John." Or one might say, "This is our regular reporting time and I have invited you to come as I have all the other parents. I will tell you about John's school work and other things. You can ask me questions about anything you wish as we go along."

This kind of opening will set the stage and will help both parents and teacher keep the conference focused.

Parent-teacher conferences are held for a number of reasons, but most conferences can be classified in three categories: (1) for getting acquainted with each other and gaining information about the child, (2) for reporting the child's progress, and (3) for solving problems related to the child's learning or behavior. Sometimes the conference is held for a combination of these reasons.

### **For Getting Acquainted**

In a getting-acquainted conference, the main purpose should be for the people who are most instrumental in guiding the life of the child at the moment to become better informed about the child in

home and school respectively. The parents should get a picture of the child's school environment, and the kind of experiences he will have. The teacher should encourage them to tell many things about the child—his physical history, ages of brothers and sisters, something about his likes and fears, and what he likes to play. It is helpful to know how many adults there are in the home and relationships involved.

It is usually easy to start such a conference and to guide it by pertinent questions from time to time. A good technique is to open the conference by describing some interesting observation about the child or to relate some activity the child recently participated in successfully. As a rule a parent responds with a reciprocal observation and the conversation is rolling. If the teacher knows what sort of information would be helpful, he can steer the conversation by well-chosen questions and comments.

In a getting-acquainted conference the teacher's purpose should be to learn as much as he can about the child, and he should make his role a listening one. From this conference the teacher should be able to get a picture of the parent-child relationship. This will help the teacher understand why the child responds to him as he does, and it will tell him how he can work with the parents. If the parent-child relationship is a good

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one, the teacher and parents can work together on a realistic basis. If the relationship is a poor one, and if there is rejection of the child, the teacher will need to try to help the parents see his good points. The teacher must beware of tearing down the child with criticism in his talks with the parents.

A getting-acquainted conference can give the teacher insight into the child's cultural background and will thus enable him to integrate the home and the school in a way that will not confuse or upset the child.

### ***For Reporting Progress***

The reporting conference which takes the place of a written report or report card is the most frequent type of conference held. The purpose of a reporting conference should be to give a thoughtful evaluation of the child's total progress, not putting undue emphasis upon academic achievement alone.

It takes skill to give a meaningful evaluation of a pupil's progress and to have the parents feel comfortable in asking questions and in making contributions. The only technique I know for this is for the teacher to be friendly, relaxed, and genuine in inviting the parents to participate. The teacher should see himself as the leader in the conference, but should also see the parents as partners who have a big stake in the child's achievement and progress. The teacher needs to treat the parents as co-operating partners and to listen to their comments with interest and respect.

Teachers need to give a thoughtful and honest evaluation of the youngster because parents have a right to know what he is achieving. They also need to initiate the discussion about all aspects of the youngster's development, and not academic learning alone.

Parents are more comfortable if the

teacher will avoid educational jargon because most of it is meaningless to them. It is quite possible to give a good report without resorting to jargon.

An important technique in a reporting conference is to be wary of making comments that lead to a "dead end." A "dead end" is just what it says—it leads to nowhere.

For example, it is common practice to tell parents that the child has good intelligence but isn't working to capacity. This leaves the parents in a predicament. They may be pleased to know that the child has good intelligence, but unless you go on to explore reasons for lack of achievement and plan ways to help the child you have gone up a "dead end." Too often people think that if a child is not achieving well he needs to work harder. Sometimes he does, but usually this is not the answer. The youngster is admonished to study when he should be playing; he is deprived of pleasures and weekly allowances; he is offered rewards. Usually these means are of no avail because the reasons for the child's failure to achieve remain untouched. Sometimes parents and teacher cannot determine the reasons and a child psychologist or child psychiatrist needs to be consulted.

Another illustration of a "dead end" is a comment by the teacher that the child fights all the time. If this is all that is said, the teacher probably hopes the parents will punish the child and thereby stop his fighting. Unless the partners—parents and teacher—can get at the reasons for the fighting and help the child feel better about himself and others, the comment is not helpful—and becomes a "dead end."

If the reporting conference becomes a two-way road, where parents feel free to ask questions, and the teacher has made careful plans, the parents should leave feeling they understand their child a little better because of the teacher's trained insight, that they have a better picture of the school program, and their child's progress and activities than they had through a written letter or formal report card.

### **For Solving Problems**

If a teacher must have a conference with parents to report that things are not going well, this conference must become an exploration and a planning if it is to be of any use to parents, child, or teacher.

When a child has a learning or behavior problem the teacher needs to keep in mind definite techniques.

In the first conference with parents the teacher must let them know that a problem exists, and he must establish a working relationship with the parents. As he states the problem, he must do it in such a way that the parents do not feel he is complaining about the child or blaming the parents for his difficulties. He will show the parents that he likes the child, is concerned about him, and needs the parents' knowledge to help.

It is possible to state a problem without complaining about the child.

One can say "John seems unhappy in his relations with others" rather than "John is a constant source of annoyance to others." The first statement may pave the way toward a discussion of John's underlying feelings and ways to change them; the second statement may cause the parents to become angry and may block further discussion. The first statement is really the more scientific because it is directed toward underlying dynamics rather than surface behavior.

Once the nature of the problem is before them, the parents and teacher should try to move on to exploration of reasons, and plan how each one can help the child. It is best for each to decide what he can do to help after reasons have been explored and some of the child's needs are clear. This is sound technique because we each take more interest and initiative in plans we have suggested ourselves.

If parents seem unable to think of reasons for the child's behavior, the teacher can suggest several, saying

"Sometimes this seems to cause unhappiness," and then let the parents react to the idea. The teacher should be cautious to state that his suggestions are possible reasons and leave the door open for further exploration and tentative planning.

If parents cannot think of any plan to help meet the child's needs, the teacher can again give several suggestions, saying, "this sometimes helps," and then let the parents choose their course of action.

Unless parents push the teacher for suggestions of what they should do, it might be better for the teacher to say, "You don't have to decide now. You can think over what we have talked about today and decide later."

Often the real need is to change the parents' attitude toward the child and this cannot be accomplished by telling them "things to do." Frequently, the conference is most helpful in bringing a different perspective to the parents, a new awareness of family relationships. With different perspective and new awareness, changes may come in family relationships that will mean a real difference to the child and make him happier.

To work out a problem, whether it be learning or behavior, usually takes more than one conference. Parents and teacher need to see each other from time to time to determine how things are going and to make further plans if necessary.

**TO SUMMARIZE THE TECHNIQUES** FOR all types of conferences there are several important points for the teacher to remember: *He should keep the goal of the conference in mind; keep the focus of the conference on the child; take the initiative for steering the conversation so it will be most helpful; and see the parents as real partners, to be treated as such.*

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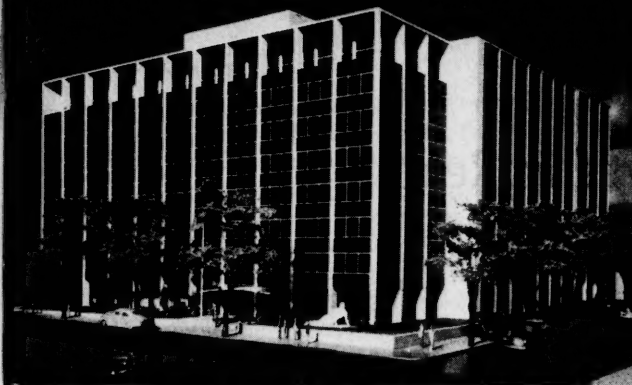
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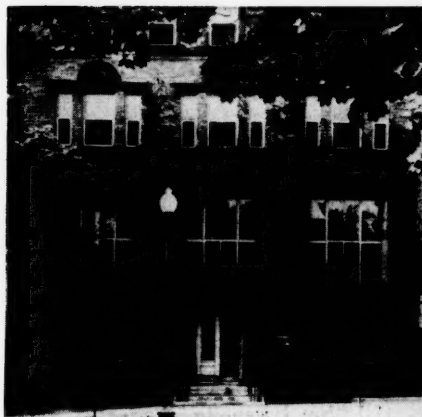


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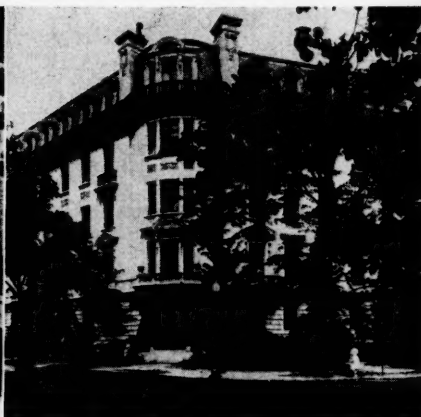
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Compiled by MARIAN JENKINS

## Here's to Success in Reading

—Self-selection Helps



Courtesy, Kansas City, Mo., Public Schools

*Hear this from children:* "This is a sissy story, may we read the story about the pirate next?" "No, I want to read about covered wagons." "Our group doesn't get as much reading time as the Green Book Group." "My mother says I should be in a higher reading group." (19)

*Hear this from teachers:* "My class is so large I can't help individual children much." "What can I do when one child is picked on?" says a teacher about a slow learner in the second grade.

"The idea of 'groups' always disturbed me because. I was never sure that every child was given optimum placement. There is a wide range of abilities even within the groups. Children . . . lose interest when stories become lessons. . . . Wandering attention, not 'keeping place,' ineffective oral reading are frequent. Attention under duress isn't attention at all. . . . Somehow children should be taught not only to read, but also to enjoy reading as well." (19)

IN OUR ROUNDS AS CONSULTANTS WE heard comments by children and teachers and observed children who were not making much progress. We were disturbed and sought help. Willard Olson's ideas of "self-selection" in learning intrigued us. (15, 16) In addition, we learned of a study in which a teacher endeavored "To Determine the Reaction of a Fourth Grade to a Program of Self-Selection of Reading Materials." (17) In talking with teachers about children selecting material for their reading, these insights regarding learning were revealed:

Children work hard and long when they choose their own jobs. They move ahead when they have opportunity to set their own goals. They read with greater enjoyment when they choose the material. In self-selection the teacher works with individuals and knows their interests and needs more adequately than when a group works on a single book chosen by the teacher.

### **Teachers Ask Questions**

If we did try self-selection said these teachers, "Where would we get enough books? How would we know where each child was in his reading?" "When would instruction in reading skills be given?" "What would parents think?" "I can see possibilities with the fast learners but what about the slow?" "Is it safe?" One teacher made suggestions to another, principals and consultants added ideas, and several indicated their desire to try out self-selection. They all felt it essential to understand purposes and possible outcomes, ways of beginning and organizing a class, ways of working with children

in individualized reading, of keeping records, and of talking with parents.

We made it clear that there have always been teachers who devised means of individualizing instruction; but that Dr. Olson has given the idea a new focus and a strong underpinning as a result of his long years of research on growth and development. Studies reveal "that children try to escape tasks that they perceive to be clearly beyond their ability and tend to persist in working upon those in which they hope to succeed." (14) Olson concludes that "a healthy child seeks from the environment those experiences which are consistent with his maturity and needs. . . . If the appropriate environment does not exist ready made or is inadequate in some major respects, the human being . . . works creatively for the conditions that advance his well-being." (15) This "seeking behavior" is the basis for self-selection. This principle is being applied successfully by parents in the self-regulating or self-demand schedule of meeting needs of infants for sleep, food, and elimination.

What then is the application to reading? "The self-selection principle as applied to . . . reading implies that a teacher will provide help and a suitable environment, but the child himself will be the judge of whether or not and at what time he should be consuming reading materials." (16) "When a teacher or parent has a high regard for seeking-behavior and self-selection the child grows into the reading experience." (15)

This material was prepared by **Helen Brandley**, formerly assistant principal, Ranchito School Dist., Pico; **Marian Jenkins**, consultant in elementary education, County of Los Angeles Schools; **Antoinette McChristy**, consultant, Whittier Elementary School Dist.; and **Dorothy Soeborg**, formerly director of curriculum, Little Lake School Dist., Santa Fe Springs. The following people (from California schools) contributed generously of their ideas, abilities, and skills:

Little Lake School Dist., Santa Fe Springs: Dorothy Anderson, Mabel Annabell, Eve Billings, Millie Chichester, Opal Johnson, Marguerite Lewis, Barbara Ott, Marguerite Selvig, Ilah Wilstach.

Los Nietos School Dist.: Mildred McMurray.

Ranchito School Dist., Pico: Mimi Eshelman, James Harper, Betty Johnson, Margaret Klug, Christina McDonald, Rita Pennington, Bud Richards.

Rosemead School Dist.: Marguerite Swafford.

Whittier Elementary School Dist.: Neal Avery, Jean Bachelder, Robert Barden, Barbara Bast, Thora Carlson, Jacqueline Chadwick, Lillian Culver, Grace Garrettson, Luella Lowell, Ruth Maguire, Ruth Mohler, Gladys Nohara, Melvin Packel, Allen Rice, Louella Risch, Beatrice Stepp, Agnes Tuttle, Irene Whitcomb, Arlene Young, Joyce Young.

Los Angeles County Schools, Office of County Superintendent: Grace Adams.

The Palmer study states: "Self-selection in reading is a method that gives the child an opportunity to respond to . . . reading in *his own way*. It does not force him into a difficult book before he is confident that he can handle it nor does it require him to read material too simple for his interest and ability." (17)

Just as a child takes from the environment what he is ready for and motivated inwardly to do, so these teachers took the idea of self-selection and used it in a variety of ways, with almost unlimited possibilities of adapting it to individual needs.

A third-grade teacher first used this technique after Christmas with her "top" group. Two other groups continued "regular" reading and used self-selection as an independent activity. Another third-grade teacher who started in the same way, with one group during the first semester, had all children using self-selection by the second semester and continued it for the remainder of the year for the full reading program.

In November a first-grade teacher used self-selection for a library period, and in the second semester used it with all the children as regular reading. Another teacher of first grade worked with experience charts for several months. When some of the children seemed ready for preprimers she urged each to choose the one he wished to read. Gradually all of the others chose their reading materials, while charts continued to be used at sharing time and during social studies.

A fifth-grade teacher started with 15 minutes at the opening and closing of the day for self-selection in reading. Soon children were selecting their materials for the full reading time, though these "fun reading" periods continued. A teacher said one day to her sixth grade, "It's time for reading groups, children, but today instead of our usual 15 or 20 minutes around the table together, we'll spend the whole hour reading at our desks. Or you may read with a classmate or two if you wish. You may read anything or any book in the room."

"Really?" "May I read my science book?" "Do we have to give book reports?" "May I

read a book I brought from home?" "May we plan a play together?" "Do I have to read?"

The teacher reports, "We took the next 15 minutes to discuss this change in reading procedure. I told the children that I believed they would learn as much and enjoy their reading more . . . I assured them that I would give them any help they needed. I also told them that I would enjoy having them read to me . . . anytime they wished." (19)

One group of youngsters who had had self-selection all year in the fifth grade, on going into sixth, badgered the teacher in a nice way until he sought information from his principal. On learning further of the plan he agreed to try it. In several seventh- and eighth-grade classes great enthusiasm was evident on the part of both teachers and students as they adapted the method to their needs.

### ***How Does a Teacher Manage?***

We urged these teachers to approach this technique in ways that made them feel secure. As consultants we were available to teachers so could talk informally with them, encourage them, observe their classes at work, and listen to their enthusiastic responses as they related children's reactions. They showed their own feelings of relaxation and release of tension which came as children were more relaxed and less competitive. They reported changes in attitudes of slow readers when they could go ahead on their own, the spurts that fast readers made when freed from group reading in a single book, and the enjoyment that average youngsters showed in being able to set their own pace.

Organization within a class was a big question. If not "regular three-group" reading and if each child were on his own, how could the teacher manage? A variety of ways of approaching the problem was discovered. No prescriptions were laid down; we listened to teachers' ideas and urged them to try them.

Some teachers, in the middle and upper grades particularly, used all kinds

of books and periodicals gathered from school, public, and personal libraries. Books were selected for classroom use closely related to children's interests as observed by the teacher, or as revealed in interest inventories, conferences and conversations with the children, and in general class discussion. Texts of all kinds furnished at school were easily obtained, and browsing books were also available. In some classrooms shelves were organized according to type—adventure, science, sports, history, and the like. Other teachers organized books according to reading level, while some wanting to find out as much as possible about children's choices distributed the books around the room in convenient spots for browsing, but without classification.

Some teachers discussed self-selection with their classes ahead of time, its organization as they sensed it, and the responses expected of the children. Others started with the selecting of books and then developed details with the class as it went along. It appeared to the consultants that teachers accustomed to using children's ideas and developing plans with them used the latter method. Those who were more comfortable with plans well developed in advance found the former way more satisfying.

Plans shaped up in about this manner—children were given an agreed upon amount of time to choose their first books, perhaps two days, or a week of reading time. This meant that they could browse and decide in an unhurried way which book was really the one they wished to tackle.

Some children found great difficulty in making choices. They wandered, looked at pictures, tried several books and wandered some more. Teachers observed these children carefully and held off exerting any pressure or even making

suggestions, in order to find out all they could about children's ways of approaching a new technique—one in which their own decision, not the teacher's, was the crux of the matter. Teachers felt free to move about among the youngsters and to engage them in informal conversation about titles and about their interests and feelings. This in itself gave support to the hesitating, and the uneasy wavering ones. This showed the teacher's trust and confidence in the ability of the children eventually to come to a decision. Once the choices were made, books read, and further choices made, most of the children were equal to the occasion and looked forward to new choices.

### *Choosing One's Own Reading*

Choosing one's own reading is the heart of self-selection. It is a strong motivating factor. Where reading has little drawing power, self-selection is a means of developing strong interest. To observe children's reactions to reading in a situation of relaxation and pleasure is a joy.

A pair in a corner are talking about their books, reading to each other and perhaps making plans for telling others about their choices; individuals are scattered about the room, in the patio or under a tree. Around the teacher has gathered a group whose individual needs are being cared for by a word pronounced, a meaning discussed, phonetic elements clarified, a question about the story answered and by being a willing listener to oral reading. The observer notes that a record of the help given each child is being jotted down in a notebook or on a card. A child may be making additions to the record of his plans to share the material or of the pages read.

Children are encouraged to react to their reading in a variety of ways. Their ideas are often most creative. Here is a list that one sixth grade made:

- Write a brief summary on a 3 by 5 card
- Tell the story to the class
- Write a formal book report



Read a story or excerpts to the class  
 Discuss the story or book with the class  
 Dramatize the story  
 Make puppets to tell the story  
 Make a shadow box  
 Read the story to the lower grades  
 Make a movie sequence to fit our "Lug Box Theater"  
 Make a poem about the book  
 Draw pictures illustrating the story  
 Bring magazine or other commercial pictures to illustrate the story  
 Bring phonograph recordings of story

Classes vary in agreements about reading the entire book or, as in the case of a reader or science book, perusing a single section related to individual interests or to finding answers to questions. Some teachers find that enthusiastic children, or those not too eager to read, spend too long on projects.

By discussion, agreements are reached on kinds of stories appropriate for dramatization, a puppet show or flannel board. Talking over a story and reading orally to the teacher are important ways of reacting and one need not react before the whole class, or even a group, on everything read. Limitations on time to be spent on projects are set, as well as suggestions made that different ways of reacting be tried. The traditional oral and written reports are acceptable, though many other exciting ways are devised. Some teachers who started with formal reports eventually gave them up as boring to both teacher and pupils.

### ***The Teacher's Role Is Different***

In self-selection, the teacher's role is somewhat different from the traditional one or at least the emphasis changes. Rather than being the one to determine who shall read together, what, when, and how they shall read and what questions they shall answer, the teacher becomes the encourager, the listener, the approver, the recorder, and the appreciator of the child's decision and plan. He may move

around the class during the reading time sitting near individuals as they indicate their needs. Or he may move quietly to an individual to listen to him read aloud, to check on words, phrasing, comprehension, or whatever the record shows has been giving him trouble. The teacher and the child fill in the record, indicating when the book was begun and finished, problems in the skills, what has been done about each problem and when, and ways that the child has reacted to the materials.

Often groups come together to work. The reason for such groups varies with the needs, the requests for help, and the desire to just talk about one's reading with one's friends. On such occasions those of different reading abilities can find many satisfactions in being together. Flexibility is the keynote here with groups varying from day to day or staying together for a short period of time to work at a common problem.

Teachers find that children are ingenious in devising ways of helping each other. This is one of the most important outcomes. For instance, an able reader may undertake, on his own, to help one less able, who has a mutual interest in horses. A couple of plodding readers may go off in a corner to labor together over a science book which has answers to their questions about snakes. One enterprising group of girls reading *Little Women* brought dolls and dressed them as the main characters.

It has been a constant source of wonder to teachers, principals, consultants, and parents to observe the self-initiated plans, the ingenuity of self-dependent children, and the great progress in reading made by the able and the less able. Even those with dual language, those with deprived home backgrounds, and some of those with emotional difficulties connected with failure

in academic learning are finding some modicum of success in reading.

The amazing thing discovered is that as children increase their amount of reading, get pleasure and satisfaction from it, and receive some encouragement and praise from their peers and their teacher, the need for continuous help with some of the minutiae related to the skills is lessened. Children discover for themselves some of the rules that are customarily used for drill. This self-discovery appears to be more potent in producing permanent learning than the traditional teacher-directed study.

A second grade teacher observed several children in their approach to words ending in "ed" and "ing." Her first thought was to get these children together and help them with the rule and practice such words. Her second thought was, "I'll watch this a bit longer." As she moved among these youngsters and talked with them, she began to realize they had found out independently that every time a word had "ed" on it, it was in the past tense. This led to a similar discovery about "ing." The excitement of this new learning led these children to notice endings on other words, to look at those which were like ones they knew, and to speculate and seek help on unknown ones.

As children grow into the need for more refined skills of comprehension, group work again can be very useful. *The important factor is that the group is gathered for a particular purpose which each member has in common with the others and it will stay together only for the time needed to accomplish its purpose.* Children in any one group may have varying degrees of reading ability and will still be reading books of their own choice.

Some teachers were concerned that in self-selection the informality of the organization and the amount of child initiative needed would be serious problems. They were fearful of "disciplinary" problems. Of course, any change in the

routines of group organization and leadership needs time, thought, and planning for full flowering. Naturally some children responded more readily and wholeheartedly than others, but with the great majority of classes, the children rose to the opportunities offered. Many times there were even fewer "disciplinary" problems and many troublesome children found an absorbing interest for the first time.

Going over the children's reading records, observing classes, hearing reports from principals and looking over test results all led us to the conclusion that this is a way of teaching and learning that brings enormous stimulation and satisfaction to most of those participating.

A fifth grade teacher wrote, "Our experiment has proved to those of us who have used it, that comfortable working conditions, adequate individual help, and the realization that each child has a rhythm of his own in learning are more important tools than formal techniques." (6)

### Some Results

Note some sample test results from a combination class *many of whose members have dual language* and, according to group tests, are certainly among the less able:\*

Name	Grade	I.Q.	Oct. Rdg. Test	June Rdg. Test	Books Read
Stella	5	93	6.0	8.5	13
Lillian	5	94	4.0	5.2	19
Vincent	5	97	4.0	5.0	26
Danny	5	90	3.8	4.5	10
David	5	90	3.8	5.0	22
Dianne	5	79	4.1	5.4	25
Alfred	6	90	4.5	6.0	29
Gilbert	6	90	3.8	5.4	21
Joe	6	85	3.2	4.5	14
Sandra	6	90	4.8	5.8	24
Becky	6	88	5.9	7.0	30
Mary Lou	6	80	3.3	4.1	14
Rose	6	72	3.6	4.8	20

\* Los Nietos School District

A school psychologist presents a summary of findings from a third grade using self-selection in reading from October 1954 to March 1955. "This class of 25 children with average I.Q. of 105 showed an average gain in reading age of seven months as measured by alternate forms of the California Achievement Test in reading. A larger gain—of 8 months—was shown in the average reading comprehension grade placement." \*\*

Test results show certain kinds of growth while children's verbal reactions show other aspects. Enjoy with us the comments of children as they evaluate self-selection. They said they enjoyed it. One teacher asked, "Why?"

"I can read faster to myself." "We can read anything we want." "We have so many and different good books."

These same children reported reasons why they did not like traditional reading groups.

"Too slow, we lost interest." "Kids lose the place and ruin the story." "We had to read stories whether we like them or not." "We had to leave in the middle of a story every time." "We didn't get to read enough, our turns were too short."

### Responses of Parents

A parent, who had been helping her son at home, ran across his problem with "th" words. In a conference with the teacher she was shown the record card on which the child and the teacher had noted his need to study "th" words and the plans being used to help him. The parent was gratified to see this evidence of individual consideration and help.

Many parents report their children are asking to be taken or to be allowed to go on their own to the public library. One mother beamed as she said she *had* to take the children to the library now as part of regular trips to the market.

A parent, who had observed in one class where there was "regular" reading and another where self-selection was under way, remarked on the noticeable difference in attitude. Children using self-selection were more enthusiastic about reading and found it difficult to stop reading, while in the other class when reading time was over, the groups just put books down and went to the next job in a matter of fact way.

\*\* Little Lake School District

Numerous reports indicate new interests in reading, the increased desire to use reference books, the able handling of dictionaries and encyclopedias, and the reading of daily papers and weekly news periodicals. Other parents are overjoyed to find their children getting along better in other subjects and liking school better.

### We Move Ahead

From the small group of teachers who first tried self-selection a year or two ago the news has spread in a steady manner. Each month there are others starting on this venture in learning. Teachers who have not tried it, but who have received classes grounded in self-selection, have commented on the children's enthusiasm for reading, their command of the skills, and their ability to plan for their own learning.

As principals and consultants worked with teachers we tried to demonstrate a way of operating that encourages and supports teachers in being flexible and in capitalizing on their ingenuity and imagination in working with their colleagues and with children.

There are many other angles which might be discussed. However, the bibliographical materials will help those who wish to try self-selection. For those who have undertaken it, the materials listed may serve to reassure them and be suggestive of refinements and additional ideas. Palmer's summary indicates several important findings about self-selection in reading:

Children tended to read something that was difficult and then something that was less difficult, thus establishing a kind of rhythm of effort and relaxation that is impossible to achieve under a three-group system in which the children are immediately presented with a more difficult reader upon completion of the book they were reading. (17)

A report from Marie M. Hughes, former principal of the Wm. Stewart



School, University of Utah, states clearly that:

1. Children choose to read in a rhythm of easy, hard, easy, hard, quite contrary to the way we take them from one book to the next harder. 2. Children *do* read. 3. The child most sensitive about his reading ability finds ways to protect himself while trying to learn. 4. Children want to grow in reading. If watched carefully you can discover how each one is making that effort.

The teachers who contributed to this article corroborate these findings and indicate that many children are gaining increased satisfaction, not only in reading but in expressing their ideas in writing. Improved sentence structure, more variety in choice of words, longer attention span and energy output are among the outcomes noted. In some classes self-selection in spelling and in mathematics also is being developed. Many teachers say they feel more relaxed and secure in using a number of teaching techniques new to them.

In addition to the advantages of self-selection to children, teachers are free to be more creative in supporting and guiding the child when he carries his own load of learning in such an active manner. As one teacher said, "The visible progress and interest of each child is exceedingly heartwarming." (6)

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## *A Man Among 6 Year Olds*

*There are more men in the elementary school but there are not many teaching in kindergarten or first grade. Are their problems the same? We will let Raymond Murgatroyd tell you of the pleasures and problems he encountered. Mr. Murgatroyd is a teacher in Rowland School, Radnor Twp., Pennsylvania.*

**"YOUR SECOND STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE** will be in the first grade at . . ."

"This must be a mistake," I thought. "Who ever heard of a man working with babies?" But it was no mistake.

After a great deal of thinking, I decided that if this had to be, I would do the best that I could and at least pretend to enjoy it. The children did not accept me immediately. But why should they? I was not at ease with them and somewhat tense. The teacher was warm and friendly and I was impelled to follow her into the world of the 6 year old. When the first girl asked me to tie a bow in the back of her dress and a boy put his dirty shoe to be tied on my spotless, light-colored trousers, I knew that I had been accepted. It was an enlightening experience and so exciting that I started to look for a first grade in which to teach upon graduation. Among many interviews, only one district would hire me as a first-grade teacher but I could not accept this offer because it necessitated moving. The remuneration for my part-time work was more than I was being offered in teaching so moving was out of the question. Both jobs were needed.

Other superintendents and principals merely smiled at my desire to work with 6 year olds, or offered hasty excuses and changed the subject. One man gave me some confidential advice. He would like to place me in a higher grade but was not

sure of an opening but suggested that in future interviews it would be better not to mention first grade. He understood but was sure others would think of me as not quite normal. In the course of the interview he had disclosed that he had older children so I asked him if he loved his children when they were 6 or waited until they reached 12 before he became interested in them. The interview ended hastily.

I eventually found myself in an excellent school system working with older children, still hoping for a first grade. A new school was being built and I was assigned to it. Meanwhile the principal of the new school and a new superintendent arrived. During our first staff meeting in preparation for the opening of the school, the superintendent included in his remarks that he would like to see more men in the primary end of the elementary schools. It was at this point that I interrupted and again made my desire known. The following September I found myself in the midst of a first-grade class. It is impossible to judge from one experience whether mine was typical and no conclusions can be made. However, many of my earlier problems were similar to other first-grade teachers.

### ***Revelations of 6 Year Olds***

My experiences in general were humorous, interesting, and very informa-

ative. Each child was a teacher to me—the 6 year old revealed things in ways easier to see. It was some of these revelations which helped me to understand why older children in other classes behaved as they did. Some of the first graders who could not function in a group and/or felt rejection by the teacher could not understand why the teacher did not give them the attention they wanted and probably received at home. As soon as this became apparent, an open discussion with the class eliminated this situation to a great extent. Repeat performances were necessary from time to time to remind them that they were still loved and that their work was recognized even though I seemed to be busy with someone else and not paying much attention to them. It was natural to be frank with this age group.

Arriving at school one morning in the fall feeling far from well, I debated whether the children should be told how I felt. I was under the impression that children did not begin to show consideration for the feelings of others until they were eight or nine. When I faced the class that morning I told them anyway. What a day that turned out to be! Kindness and thoughtfulness were the key words. Six year olds are capable of consideration.

Play time was an interesting experience. They organized quickly and played well with an adult leader. They also enjoyed their free play when they could climb, run, and use the playground facilities. They thought it was especially delightful to push, shove, and knock each other down. What fun! Gangs formed and fought each other all in a friendly manner. I tried feebly to change these activities by directing them to something else but with little success; they all seemed to enjoy themselves. The gangs soon became unfair so I told them there

would be no more. Many parents told me that their children were complaining about this rough play—the very children who acted as if they enjoyed it the most.

The gangs were gone but clubs had formed; when the clubs were ruled out, groups formed. They were very reluctant to give up this "fun." It took a great deal of firmness to put an end to the whole thing but they seemed relieved when it was over. Then a surprising thing occurred. They organized themselves into several groups and played games which varied widely depending upon the maturity of the group. Their ball games went very well though many rules were altered to allow for situations encountered by this age group. There were quite a few children who never reached this level of maturity but in varying degrees they developed their own play activities. It was surprising how often they settled their own difficulties and how few times they sought adult help. They all knew, however, that an adult was always around when needed. These 6 year olds seemed to need help in channeling these first group activities.

There were a few tears in this class—caused mostly by physical hurts or illness. There were some emotional tears but they were rare. It was impossible at times to determine the origin of the upsets. Many times the explosions occurred at home.

The children enjoyed responsibility. Though the occasions were rare, I never hesitated to leave them alone in the room. If they had work to do or knew what they were allowed to do in the room and knew why the teacher had to leave, they accepted it as a matter of fact and pursued the activities in which they were engaged. Many hardly noticed my return unless I had left with a sick or injured child. They were very much interested in the welfare of the others.



*Courtesy, Oklahoma City Public Schools*

**The hows, wheres, and whys never stopped.**

The children were also very much interested in their teacher. The questions they asked me at times made me feel as if I were a prisoner of war being interrogated. They remembered the answers with amazing detail, including the foods that both my wife and I enjoyed the most.

The majority of these children were extremely generous. They loved to give and share. So many of the attributes of this group were what the children brought with them from home. The parents' attitudes and concerns were definitely reflected through their children. I found it very difficult when parents compared their child with the child who achieved more in the various areas and thought

their child defective or the teaching poor. The children formed their own opinions, very accurately, too.

***They Learn To Evaluate***

The children's work was often discussed in groups or individually with the teacher. They evaluated themselves or the group's work quite accurately. They knew when they were not doing good work or if the class as a whole had a good or bad day.

Almost every day before going home we talked over what we had learned. This part seemed very important to me after experiencing a very busy day early in the year when all the children had worked

hard and had done well in their academic work. The last few minutes were spent in preparing some cans for use as flower pots. As they were waiting to go out for the buses, I asked them if they had a good day. There was a shout of "yes." "What did you learn?" followed by a chorus of, "How to punch holes in cans." Reading, writing, and numbers were forgotten. I could hear the parental questions, "What did you do in school today?" answered with "We had a good time, we punched holes in cans with nails."

Our school's method of reporting is the parent-teacher conference which often includes the child. This method is a great help to all of us in aiding each to understand the child better. Who, after all, knows the child better as an individual than the parents, or as a group member, than the teacher?

Trying to work with the parents for the good of the children was my aim. But my thinking became confused when in one afternoon one parent accused me of being the strictest disciplinarian she had ever run into and another who made the statement that there was no discipline in the room. Neither one had ever been in the room while the class was in session. To keep the parents informed on general activities between conferences, I dittoed a bulletin from time to time.

### ***Learning Was Fun***

One by one each child learned to read and I experienced the joy with them. Reading was not the only subject which fascinated this group. Interest in science, especially the natural sciences, was at a peak during the entire year. The *hows*, *wheres*, and *whys* never stopped. Countless items from their homes poured in for the class activities for this subject. It seemed to be a wonderful age for exploring, experimenting, and discovering.

Classroom pets provoked many questions that could not be answered in the classroom. The arrival of an alligator caused us to make a trip to the library and to the corner where the reference books were kept. A great deal was learned about this reptile but we still did not know how to care for it. A letter to the zoo brought a reply and we were able to care for him and keep him well.

What to do with the children who always finished their work quickly taxed my ingenuity. They would look for something else to do but more often than not would end in some mischief. Having exhausted my mental repertoire of what should interest them, I pulled out a drawer full of electrical supplies. This kept them creatively busy for days although a homemade device had to be developed to help them understand and follow the various circuits they made. I showed them how to make a total of 21 circuits with the materials on hand. When these had been tried many times they proceeded to show me a few of their own and added to the collection.

The children were interested in plants, weather, maps, and the school as well as reading, writing, and arithmetic. They were easily distracted from their work by fire engines, snow, and other excitement. Wind was a primary concern after living through a rather severe hurricane. They always settled down quickly after interruptions and went back to work.

The day we went to the zoo was a memorable one. No parents were asked to go along. The children acted much more grown-up away from mother. There were no difficulties, no lost children. Do not think the mothers were being slighted. They were a big help throughout the year as were all my first-grade teacher friends. Without their assistance my year would not have been nearly as happy.



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# NEWS and REVIEWS

## News HERE and THERE . . .

By FRANCES HAMILTON

### ACEI Committees—1955-1957

During its meetings in April and August of this year, the ACEI Executive Board created several new ACEI committees and appointed new biennial chairmen and members to other committees already established. The newly established committees, their chairmen, and their purposes are:

#### *Foreign Languages in the Elementary School*

Chairman: Elizabeth Henson, Richmond, Va.  
Purposes: To consider the place of foreign languages in the elementary-school program, to discover what is being done in this field in the schools today, and to consider the responsibility of ACEI for making available information on the teaching of foreign languages in the elementary schools.

#### *Legislation*

Chairman: Margaret M. Marshall, Indianapolis, Ind.

Purposes: To keep informed on current legislative action of national, state, and local governments; to identify problems of regional implication concerning children; to suggest ways in which interested people can work on legislation in their own communities; to suggest ways that ACE branches may cooperate with other groups to effect legislative action in the interests of children.

#### *Research*

Chairman: Ruth Strickland, Bloomington, Ind.  
Purposes: To keep ACEI informed as to research being done; meet with and offer assistance to ACEI committees at the annual Study Conferences, offering advice on research work; serve as consultants to ACEI committees upon request with regard to carrying on research.

New chairmen and members have been appointed for 1955-1957 to these committees:

#### *Books for Adults*

Chairman: Charles Dent, Austin, Tex.

#### *Bulletins and Pamphlets*

Chairman: Patsy Montague, Raleigh, N. C.

#### *Children's Books for \$1.25 or Less*

Chairman: Sybil Hanna, Jackson, Miss.

#### *Equipment and Supplies*

Chairman: George Raab, Scarsdale, N. Y.

#### *Nominations, 1955-1957*

Chairman: Dorothea Jackson, Seattle, Wash.

The chairmen of the ACEI Standing Committees who assumed their responsibilities upon election by the ACEI membership to the Executive Board are:

Frances Ready, chairman, *Kindergarten Education Committee*.

Josephine Palmer, chairman, *Nursery Education Committee*.

Other ACEI committees whose work is currently in progress are:

#### *Among the Magazines*

#### *Bibliography of Books for Children*

#### *Consultant on Children's Literature in Library of Congress*

#### *Credentials and Election*

#### *Intermediate Education*

#### *Primary Education*

#### *Problems Related to Playgrounds for Children*

#### *School Housing*

#### *Work and Play Portfolio*

### *Nominations for Executive Board Positions*

January 1, 1956, is the deadline for suggestions from ACE members for people who should be considered for candidacy in the April 1957, ACEI election of officers. The three Executive Board positions to be filled at that time are: president, vice-president representing kindergarten education, and vice-president representing nursery school education. To maintain the representative geographical distribution of the ACEI Executive Board, these three officers should be selected from the Great Lakes, Great Plains, and the North Atlantic Regions.

Your suggestions may be sent to: Miss Dorothea Jackson, Chairman, 1955-1957 ACEI Nominations Committee, 815 4th Ave., North, Seattle 9, Wash.

### *Memorial Endowment Fund*

The name of Nellie E. Brown of Springfield, Massachusetts, has been placed on the Roll of Honor of the Association. The funds for this have come as part of the legacy to ACEI in the will of Miss Brown, who died last year. When Miss Brown taught in the schools of

Bangor, Maine, the teachers with whom she worked presented her with \$100 for the express purpose of having her name on the Roll of Honor. An additional \$900 has been placed, through this legacy, in the Memorial Endowment Fund of the Association.

#### **For ACE Members**

The 1955 *ACEI Yearbook* and the *Manual for ACE Branches and State Associations* were mailed to branch officers and International Members of the Association for Childhood Education International in September. These materials, along with issues of the *Branch Exchange*, *CHILDHOOD EDUCATION*, and the 1955-1957 *ACEI Plan of Action*, are the basic working materials of those whose interests in children are served through the Association.

#### **Reprints Available**

In the October issue of *CHILDHOOD EDUCATION*, Mary E. Leeper has called attention to recent publications in reply to *Why Johnny Can't Read* in an article entitled "What They Are Saying About Johnny."

A limited supply of reprints of this article is available. Order from ACEI, 1200-15th St., NW., Washington 5, D. C. The first copy is free; more than one, 10¢ each.

#### **Cooperation for Children**

Through the cooperation of the Michigan ACE and the Michigan Education Association, superintendents, supervisors, and principals in the State will receive copies of the 1955-1957 *ACEI Plan of Action for Children* and the folder *Publications and Other Information*. The materials were provided by the Michigan ACE and are being distributed as a part of a communication by the Michigan Education Association.

#### **Changes**

**Robert Fleming**, Coordinator of Study Groups at the 1955 ACEI Conference, has joined the staff of New York University. He was formerly on the faculty of the University of Tennessee.

**Erna Christensen**, Secretary-Treasurer of ACEI from 1951 to 1953, has joined the teaching staff of the Bronxville, New York, elementary schools. She was formerly a teacher in Hartsdale, New York.

**Mark W. Bills** has been appointed Superintendent of the Peoria, Ill., Public Schools.

Dr. Bills was Superintendent of Schools in Kansas City, Mo., at the time of the 1955 ACEI Study Conference.

**Herold C. Hunt** has been named Under-Secretary of the Health, Education, and Welfare Department of the United States. Dr. Hunt comes to his new position from Harvard University, where he was Professor of Educational Administration. He has served as President of the American Association of School Administrators, as Superintendent of Schools in New Rochelle, N. Y., Kansas City, Mo., and Chicago, Ill.

#### **NEA—Kindergarten-Primary**

The Kindergarten-Primary Department of the National Education Association has elected officers for the year 1955-56. Laura Clark of Detroit, Michigan, is the new president, succeeding Elizabeth Hamlin of Memphis, Tennessee.

#### **White House Conference on Education**

Citizens of the United States will gather in Washington, November 28 to December 1, in culmination of a year-long concentrated study of their schools. The 1955 White House Conference on Education will take place at that time. More than 2000 educators and other citizens will meet for four days to exchange ideas, to discuss school affairs, and to analyze the major problems of education as outlined by the Committee appointed earlier by the President. During the months preceding the Conference, groups have been weighing educational problems in their own communities and states, preparatory to discussion of the issues on a national basis.

#### **U.S. National Committee for Childhood Education**

The United States National Committee for Childhood Education will hold a work-conference for members of the Committee and registrants from outside the United States who are particularly interested in early childhood education on March 31, immediately preceding the ACEI Study Conference in Washington, D. C.

#### **New UNESCO Film**

*Books for All*, a film produced by UNESCO, has been viewed by members of ACEI Headquarters Staff. The film shows UNESCO's part in promoting the reading of books around the world.



## Books for Children . . .

Editor, CHRISTINE B. GILBERT

**THE MAGIC LISTENING CAP.** *Retold and illustrated by Yoshiko Uchida.* New York: Harcourt, 383 Madison Ave., 1955. Pp. 146. \$2.50.

**HOW RABBIT STOLE FIRE.** *By Emily Broun. Illustrated by Jack Ferguson.* New York: Aladdin, 55 5th Ave., 1954. Unp. \$2.25.

**RUMPELSTILTSKIN.** *Adapted by Patricia Jones. Illustrated by Jan B. Balet.* New York: Rand McNally & Container Corp. of America, 111 8th Ave., 1954. Pp. 31. \$3.

**THE FABLES OF INDIA.** *By Joseph Gaer. Illustrated by Randy Monk.* Boston: Little, Brown, 34 Beacon St., 1955. Pp. 176. \$3.

**THE TRAIL-DRIVING ROOSTER.** *By Fred Gipson. Illustrated by Mark Simont.* New York: Harper, 49 E. 33rd St., 1955. Pp. 79. \$2.25.

**TOM BENN AND BLACKBEARD, THE PIRATE.** *Written and illustrated by Le Grand.* Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 810 Broadway. 1954. Pp. 63. \$2.

Folk tales and fairy tales are an important part of every child's reading heritage. Their value in stimulating the imagination and acting as a healthy outlet for emotional tensions is as important as the role they play in reflecting the way of life in other countries and other times.

*The Magic Listening Cap* is the second collection of Japanese folk tales by this author. These 14 little-known folk tales have humor, wisdom, and an imaginative quality in which children will delight. *Ages: 6 to 10.*

*How Rabbit Stole Fire* is a retelling of the popular Cherokee Indian legend which tells of how Rabbit stole the sacred fire from the Medicine Man to give it to the people for their daily use. Children will be interested in comparing this legend with the Greek version of Prometheus. *Ages: 5 to 9.*

It is good to have this story of *Rumpelstiltskin*, one of the favorite Grimm tales, in a single volume with interesting illustrations by Jan Balet. *Ages: 6 to 9.*

*The Fables of India* which are retold in this

(Continued on page 140)

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## Books for Children

(Continued from page 139)

collection are taken from three of the great Indian classics. These fables are known as "beast tales" since they all deal with animals who behave like human beings. The Hindus were the earliest and perhaps the greatest of the fablers, and the morals which these stories point out are as timely today as when they were first written. *Ages: 9 to 14.*

*The Trail-Driving Rooster* is an American tall tale from the cowboy country, telling of the extraordinary feats of a rooster named Dick. The humorous exploits of this rooster, who became the pet of the cowboys on their drive taking cattle from Texas to Dodge City, Kansas, will appeal to youngsters 8 to 12.

*Tom Benn and Blackbeard, the Pirate* is the tall tale from the North Carolina Country which tells "the amazing inside story of how Blackbeard, the pirate, was captured." This is an excellent story for young readers who demand adventure. *Ages: 7 to 10.*

**LITTLE RED NOSE.** By Miriam Schlein.

*Illustrated by Roger Duvoisin. New York: Abelard-Schuman, 381 4th Ave., 1955. Unp., \$2.50.* The effect of the coming of spring on a little boy is the theme of this story. "Sometimes things start happening and you never know they're happening. They're just as quiet as a dream—but still they really happen." All of the magic and joy and quiet appearance of this new season are woven into a lovely story with distinctive illustrations by Roger Duvoisin. *Ages: 5 to 8.*

**THE HOUSE BEYOND THE MEADOW.**

*Written and illustrated by Harry Behn. New York, Pantheon, 333 6th Ave., 1955. Unp. \$2.50.* Harry Behn has written some distinguished books of poetry for children and in this book he takes us on an excursion into fairyland. It would be a delight to read these verses to children and watch them succumb to their magic and enchantment. *Ages: 6 to 10.*

**SPACE CAT VISITS VENUS.** By Ruthven

Todd. *Illustrated by Paul Galdone. New York: Scribner's, 597 5th Ave. 1955. Pp. 87. \$2.* Science fiction has been so popular these days with children that even the 8 to 10 year olds want books in this field. Ruthven Todd has written a sequel to her earlier story of *Space Cat*, in which Flyball, the only cat on

the moon, plans to go to the planet Venus in a rocket ship. This is a delightfully imaginative story which will satisfy readers 8 to 11.

**AMIKUK.** By Rutherford G. Montgomery. Illustrated by Marie Nonnast. Cleveland: World, 2231 W. 110th St., 1955. Pp. 204.

\$2.75. The Aleutian Islands are the setting for this very readable adventure story of Amikuk, a sea otter. Amikuk's life was a hazardous one, for he grew up in dangerous waters populated by sharks, sea lions, and whales, and was the constant prey of hunters who wanted his valuable pelt. This is both a fine animal story and an excellent tale of adventure at sea. *Ages: 10 to 14.*

**THE BUFFALO TRACE.** By Virginia S. Eijfert. Illustrated by Manning De V. Lee.

New York: Dodd, Mead, 432 4th Ave., 1955. Pp. 192. \$3. This is an account of three generations in Abraham Lincoln's family. The first Abraham Lincoln sold his farm in Virginia to follow Daniel Boone into the wilderness of Kentucky. His son, Tom Lincoln, grew up in this wilderness territory, married Nancy Hanks, and had a son, Abraham Lincoln, who grew up to be president. This is a fictitious account of the travels and early pioneer life of the Lincoln, Hanks, and Boone families. *Ages: 11 to 16.*

**MEN, MICROSCOPES, AND LIVING**

**THINGS.** By Katherine B. Shippen. Illustrated by Anthony Ravielli. New York: Viking, 18 E. 48th St., 1955. Pp. 192. \$3. Katherine Shippen has the faculty for making an account of the historical development of science as romantic and exciting as a modern adventure story. In her newest book she tells, through the lives and works of outstanding biologists, how man came to understand the living things around him and of how this search for an explanation of the "mystery of life" is still going on. Anthony Ravielli's illustrations are a handsome addition to the book. A fine book for all school and public library collections. *Ages: 11 up.*

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## Books for Adults . . .

Editors: LAURA ZIRBES  
CECILE SWALES

**WITH PERSPECTIVE ON HUMAN RELATIONS.** A Study of Peer Group Dynamics in an Eighth Grade. By *Hilda Taba*, Washington, D. C.: American Council on Education, 1758 Mass. Ave., N.W., 1955. Pp. 155. \$1.75. For those readers who enjoyed Deborah Elkins' book, *With Focus on Human Relations*, also published by American Council on Education, 1950, this companion book will be of particular interest. It is the product of action research creatively carried through by a team intent on testing some hypotheses concerning the dynamics of interpersonal relations in a group of 25 eighth graders from ten different ethnic backgrounds.

The first four chapters "dealt with the ways of helping the members of a peer group to incorporate important democratic values into their way of life instead of teaching them directly."

For the "Extension of Sensitivity by Story Discussions," books chosen in terms of their relatedness to the identified needs of the eighth graders became the basis for 41 class discussions."

The concluding observations suggest many aspects of human relations for which research is urgently needed.—Reviewed by MARY JANE LOOMIS, University School, Ohio State Univ.

**TOWARD BETTER SCHOOL DESIGN.** By William W. Caudill. New York: F. W. Dodge Corp., 119 W. 40th St. 1954. Pp. 288. \$12.75. This functional approach to school building construction from the definition of the problem to the final landscaping leaves little to be desired. The effort spent on the part of the architect in learning how children learn and grow and how modern educators are striving to implement what is known about child development appears to be bearing considerable fruit in the publication *Toward Better School Design* and in the development of the many fine school plants over the country. The many case studies and accompanying illustrations pinpoint to the readers how many school building problems have

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been solved. Interested groups then may develop a basis on which to think critically about their concerns and penetrate the surface of the problem or problems.

This publication should prove of much benefit in helping educators, parents, and citizens of a community define their school building problems and arrive at solutions that will provide the best educational facilities for the community.—Reviewed by VICTOR HOFFMAN, *University School, Ohio State Univ.*

**THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING. A Twofold Approach.** By Noble Lee Garrison. New York: Dryden Press, 31 W. 54th St., 1955. Pp. 461. \$4.50. This author's twofold approach to the improvement of teaching indicates that the personal development of individuals and the constructive functioning of groups must both be considered if the teacher is to improve in the responsibilities which constitute the role as modern education defines it. The book is divided into four parts each one of which begins with an overview. The four themes are handled in 15 chapters which comprehensively cover the major aspects of the teacher's role. There are case materials in several chapters. There are 16 excellent illus-

trations each accompanied by a page of "Photo comment." Summaries, bibliographies, and "Discussion Problems" at the ends of chapters make a contribution to the reader and suggest the use of the book in study groups of inservice teachers, although the author seems to indicate through his captions and otherwise that all but the last chapters were written to orient prospective teachers.

—L.Z.

#### THE CHALLENGE OF BEING A WOMAN.

By Helen Sherman and Marjorie Coe. New York: Harper, 49 E. 33rd St., 1955. Pp. 303. \$3.95. This is an interesting and provocative book. Any woman will be intrigued to see which of the five types of women, so clearly described, she resembles most closely. She will want to check herself on the Happiness Quiz; see how she rates on the conversation checkup; test her knowledge of the "seven great problems facing mankind"; and study the specific suggestions for managing her negative emotions. Part One on which these challenging activities are set forth is really a down-to-earth discussion of the soundest principles of mental hygiene.

(Continued on page 144)

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## Books for Adults

(Continued from page 143)

If the reader is a mother, confronted with the perennial problems of child guidance, she will find specific techniques and suggestions, based on modern child psychology, to give her practical help and increased confidence in meeting such situations. The book is an excellent one for teachers to recommend to parents and leaders of mothers clubs and study groups concerned with child development and family life—C.S.

**PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION.** By B. J. Chandler and Paul V. Petty. Yonkers-on-Hudson, N. Y.: World Book Co., 1955. Pp. 598.

\$4.75. These authors call attention to the new emphasis on the human element in management and administration in education and in other fields. They attribute this emphasis to recent developments in the behavioral sciences and they bring those developments to bear on the problems of school administration in exceedingly helpful ways.

After a more or less historical section they proceed to take up in succession four aspects of teacher personnel, conditions of teacher

service, and related school personnel problems. Chapter heads and index are useful.—L.Z.

## HEALTH IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:

**The Role of the Classroom Teacher.** By Herbert Walker. New York: Ronald Press, 15 E. 26th St., 1955. Pp. 228. \$4. This book, written primarily for the classroom teacher, emphasizes the importance of the teacher in the school health program and the necessity for an understanding of the "normal, healthy child" as well as those who deviate from normal.

After a brief historical background of changes and developments in the field, the writer elaborates on each special phase of the school health program. The areas included are: growth and development, health appraisal, communicable diseases, screening (vision, hearing, height, and weight), emergency care in accidents and sudden illness, the physically handicapped, the health teaching program, programs of safety education and physical education, school and community relationships, and evaluation of the health program.

The author suggests definite steps to follow in the health teaching program. In discussing screening programs he gives information on



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devices and instructions for procedure; but it is difficult to understand why the whisper and watch tests are mentioned since they are no longer considered acceptable for determining hearing acuity.—Reviewed by FLORENCE FOGLE, *Ohio State Univ.*

**GUIDING GROWTH IN READING IN THE MODERN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.** By Margaret G. McKim. New York: Macmillan, 60 5th Ave., 1955. Pp. 528. \$5.25. This comprehensive book focuses on the instructional program and attempts to answer teachers' questions by describing actual classroom practices. For experienced teachers the book offers a refresher course on the many phases of reading instruction, and for the beginning teacher it might serve as a very practical and usable reference volume. The sequential development of reading skills from the beginning or pre-reading stages through the later elementary levels is the basis used to organize the material presented in the first four parts. In the fifth and last section, many concrete suggestions for appraising, recording, and reporting progress are included. The final

(Continued on page 146)

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**Books for Adults**

(Continued from page 145)

chapter deals with the problem of caring for the child who needs remedial help.

Attention is given throughout to the inter-relatedness of all language arts experiences and how these experiences help the child function more effectively in other situations. The need for varying the reading program to meet individual needs and for adjusting reading techniques to specific situations is emphasized.—Reviewed by ESTHER SCHATZ, *University School, Ohio State Univ.*

**SCHOOL MUSIC HANDBOOK.** By Peter W. Dykema and Hannah M. Cundiff. Boston: Birchard, 285 Columbus Ave., 1955. Pp. 689. \$5. For those who are interested in music education for children in the elementary grades and the junior high school, here is a veritable gold mine; when used as a source book it answers many questions asked by parents and teachers.

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## Books for Adults

(Continued from page 147)

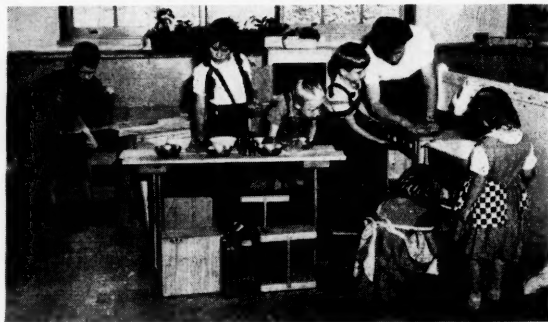
thors take up the relationship between the parent and the retarded child, the fitting of the child into the family group, and ways of helping him to acquire an attitude toward life which will enable him to grow up happy and useful.

Questions such as these are answered: Should I keep my child at home or send him to a residential school? How can I help my child to talk, play, and help himself? Some concrete examples are given to help the parent help the child.

Designed primarily for parents, it gives practical suggestions which will guide them to better understand and adjust to their retarded child. The parents will find insight into their own emotional needs as well as those of their child.

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## Among the Magazines . . .

Editors, LUCY NULTON and Teachers  
P. K. Yonge School, Univ. of Fla., Gainesville

Every now and then one of our parents greets us with, "Hey. Have you read—?" Or the phone rings and a parent voice says, "Don't miss this article in—." We, too, say to our parents, "There's a good article about children (or family living, or this problem, that problem) in —. Be glad to lend you my copy if you'd like it." This month we share with you our sharing with parents.

Perhaps we should begin with Dr. Benjamin Fine's excellent "Annual Review of What's New About Schools," *Parents' Magazine*, Oct. 1955. Needless to say, this is authoritative and well written. This same issue has an article by Jack Harrison Pollack, "Meet a Family Named Robinson," about the family and school life of Jackie Robinson Jr. who is the only Negro child in his class at school. For the parent who believes in homework or has

it thrust upon him, there is in this issue Staton's, "How to Help Your Child to Study," which, although it takes a nasty dig at schools for not teaching children how to study, offers specific and sound directions valuable to all of us.

Yes, that October issue is a good copy, but no teacher or parent (unless that parent is forever past the 8-year-old level and expects no grandchildren) should miss Janet Jackson's, "The Crucial Year in School." (*Parents' Magazine*, Nov. 1955.) Someday we shall awake to the fact that the 8-year metamorphosis is quite as painful and crucial as adolescence.

*The Two to Five World News* is so filled with things helpful to parents that a complete back file is worth buying if you don't have all its issues. The August issue has the "Annual Evaluation of Television and Radio Programs for Young Children," a review feature, "Texts for Parents," and two good articles about the importance of a handicapped child having a chance to live with "normal" children.

(Continued on page 150)

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## Among the Magazines

(Continued from page 149)

There are so many good articles in the *National Parent-Teacher Magazine* it is hard to select! A series on the preschool child and one on mental health are surely worthy reading for both parents and teachers. The series on adolescence last year is equally worth going back to. Perhaps they may all be summed up in the recognition that teachers and parents must "journey toward freedom hand in hand with" the growing personality.

Many are the uses of a reprint from *Woman's Day* of "A Child's Bill of Rights," by Dorothy Blake. A series of study sessions or Parent-Teacher Association programs could be built from this reprint. It is still available.

In the August 1955 *McCall's* "Dr. Spock Talks with Mothers" concerning, "What makes a child willing or unwilling to be helpful around the house." In the same issue, "Drama in the Dollhouse" describes play therapy in

which Dr. Lillian Whitmore uses a portable dollhouse to help diagnose "children's ills that neither pills nor injections can reach."

The September issue of *Pageant* presents briefly, with photographs of the child's drawings, "The Case History of a Disturbed Child." This graphic presentation of the case has power.

For those of us who suffer from "a more modern disorder which we can call *chronic verbalism*" (italics ours!) there is "The Joy of Being Wide Awake," by Roy McMullen, *House Beautiful*, June 1955. This is worth saving to enjoy through years to come! "We could do with much more awareness of . . . the sights, sounds, tastes, smells which are the warm, organic stuff of domestic happiness."

In the July 1955 *Good Housekeeping* is "A Letter Written at Midnight," Bernice Dunn, a warming story of the love of a mother for her 6-year-old daughter: the fun they have doing things together, the anxiety when the child is ill, the joy of finding it is not a serious illness, and the realization that "simple love" binds

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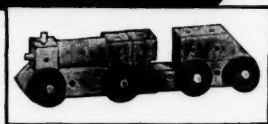
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Those who still love and practice good, old-fashioned family reading together will be interested in "The World of Paperbacks," Alex Rider, *The Nation*, Aug. 27, 1955, because most such families can never get enough books to satisfy their eagerness.

If you seek several warm chuckles just for fun there is John Allan May, Englishman, who has discovered that the United States is "definitely not a woman's country." He tells why in "America You Amaze Me," *Woman's Day*, Aug. 1955.

Whether parent, teacher, or both, life holds one more rich experience for you when you gather a group of children and begin to read aloud, "The Magic Bed-Knob" by Mary Norton published in two parts in *Woman's Day*, Aug. and Sept. 1955. Not since Mary Poppins or the children created by Elizabeth Goudge in her English cathedral settings, has there been anything like this story of three children who meet someone studying to be a real, live witch.

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## Over the Editor's Desk

**Rushing** We think this story, recorded by Jean Betzner who was working with a seven-year-old, is a good one to remember as we begin this year's work with children.

"I don't like to rush in the morning.

I don't like to rush at noon.

I don't like to rush at night.

I like to take my time.

When I take my time I can wash behind my ears.

When I take my time I can eat two pieces of toast.

When I have time people don't get crabby.

I don't like to rush."

**Next Month** "What Are Levels?" is the challenging topic for the December issue of CHILDHOOD EDUCATION which begins with an editorial by Arnold Gesell.

If we practiced what we preached, how would we look at levels from—child growth and development, democratic process, and the psychology of learning? Warren A. Ketcham, Arthur W. Combs, and Mary Beauchamp have prepared the three vantage points.

"What are some of the confusions concerning unit teaching?" is a topic carefully thought through by Mary Jane Loomis.

"How can we understand transition periods in children's development?" has been prepared by Walter D. Smith.

A school explains its program as presented by its principal, George R. Reynolds.

There will be a special article in the subject area field, another on the teacher, and another report on Concerns for Children Are Worldwide.

News and reviews will bring news notes of

the Association, reviews of books for children, books for adults, and bulletins and pamphlets.

**A Book Fair in Korea** A wonderful afternoon was spent hearing about the first Book Fair in Korea. Nora Beust, Office of Education, U. S. Department of HEW, was on leave last year to be a member of the American Education Team. This team was a project of the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency, organized by the Unitarian Service Committee with aid from the American Korean Foundation.

She told that with five cartons of American books for children which she had sent over, plans for the first Children's Book Fair in Korea were started. The Koreans supplied copies of children's books and textbooks published at the new printing plant given by UNESCO and United Nations. The most unusual display was that of seven incunabula, all Korean children's books, dating to 1432.

These books became the nucleus of what proved to be a happy experience for more than 12,000 Koreans of all ages.

The Festivities were held in the USIS Theater. It was gay with posters made by middle school and high school students and chrysanthemums grown by students of Seoul National University. Tape recordings of songs by elementary school pupils were played.

Only favorable comments appeared in the press and over the radio. The publishers said that now that they had seen it demonstrated, they would continue to sponsor Book Week in Korea. The National Library responded with a National Reading Week and showed books printed since Japanese occupation.



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